

Testimony of

Andrew Martinez, Ph.D., M.S.W.

Submitted to the Connecticut Appropriations Committee

February 21, 2017

Dear Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Andrew Martinez, and I have spent nearly 20 years working with children, families, and a wide-range of community-based organizations in the Bridgeport community. I submit this testimony today to urge you to preserve full funding to after school programs. More specifically, I urge there to be a separate line item for state After School Grants in the Department of Education budget.

The current budget proposal for FY 2017-18 and FY 2018-19 would eliminate funding for after school programs. Under this budget proposal 59 sites across Connecticut would be affected, 9 of which are in Bridgeport. The reality is that children and families in urban communities, such as Bridgeport, rely heavily on after school programs. Census data (2015)¹ show that approximately 25% percent of children in Bridgeport live in poverty. These families often do not have the financial means to place their children in afterschool care. Eliminating this funding can signify the difference between having children in a safe afterschool environment and being unsupervised. Ultimately, cutting funds to afterschool programs would place impoverished and low-income children at greater risk.

Furthermore, out-of-school-time programs (e.g., afterschool programs) are critical to promoting positive social-emotional development. Some of the most rigorous research conducted to date shows that children in after-school programs that promote personal and social skills, show gains in school grades, positive social behaviors, as well as school bonding². These gains are demonstrated when compared to similar children who are not enrolled in after school programs.

The research also shows that afterschool programs can have academic benefits. For example, a review of 35 out-of-school-time programs (e.g., after school programs) shows that these programs have positive benefits in the areas of math and reading. In fact, these gains are even more pronounced for programs that include an academic component such as tutoring in

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/0908000/accessible>

² Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., & Pachan, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 45(3-4), 294-309.

reading³. Many of the afterschool programs in Bridgeport contain an academic component such as homework assistance and tutoring, in addition to enrichment and social-emotional activities. Thus, these programs further reinforce what is learned during the school day and help to reduce the achievement gap. However, eliminating this funding would jeopardize the progress that these programs have made.

Once again, I urge you to restore full funding to after school programs. Bridgeport's children are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Andrew Martinez, Ph.D., M.S.W.

³ Lauer, P. A., Akiba, M., Wilkerson, S. B., Apthorp, H. S., Snow, D., & Martin-Glenn, M. L. (2006). Out-of-school-time programs: A meta-analysis of effects for at-risk students. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(2), 275-313.